DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 650 EA 024 094

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TITLE Connections between Macro and Micro Implementation of Educational Policy: A Study of School Restructuring in Western Australia.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; *Intergroup Relations; Participative Decision Making; *Politics of Education; *Program Implementation; School Based Management; *School Restructuring; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *Australia (Western Australia)

ABSTRACT

Findings of a 3-year study of the policy implementation process in three western Australian secondary schools are presented in this paper, which focuses on the macro and micro aspects of implementation. To examine responses to the formation of school-based decision-making groups, methodology involved: (1) document analysis; (2) interviews with Ministry of Education officials and representatives from parent/community groups, a teachers' union, and superintendents' and principals' associations; (3) observation; and (4) surveys. Findings suggest that officials in the Ministry, teachers' union, principals' associations, and parent/citizen groups influenced policy implementation at the macro level and also affected the perceptions and decisional procedures undertaken by teachers, parents, and principals at the micro level. Policy implementation is viewed as a process of "interactive modification"--a dynamic relationship in which change occurs simultaneously in both the innovation and the environment. Recommendations are made for support strategies. (16 references) (LMI)

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Connections Between Macro and Micro Implementation of Educational Policy: A study of School Restructuring in Western Australia.

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Paper Prepared for Presentation
at the
Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA),
San Francisco, April 20-24, 1992.

EA024094

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Background and Rationale

Over the last decade many Central Education Authorities in Australia, New Zealand, Britain and the United States have embarked on a process to devolve decision-making and to establish school based management within their respective schooling systems. While a range of rationales for such change have been offered, the manner in which Central Authorities have initiated change has been similar. Generally, the adoption and implementation of these policies has been mandated. While this "top down" approach in pursuit of the "bottom up" restructuring objectives has resulted a degree of success for some education systems, for others the push for school based decision-making and management has been fraught with problems. Such has been the case for the Western Australian school system where responses to these substantial and complex change endeavours have ranged from reluctant adoption through resistance to subversion and industrial action. Many of the difficulties in affecting policy implementation appear to stem from a poorly conceived or non-existent plans for the management of the restructuring. Critically, such an approach to policy implementation indicates a lack of understanding about the nature of the change process within educational settings by those with the responsibility for formulating the policies and implementing change.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, to report on specific outcomes of a three year empirical study concerning the process policy implementation in three Western Australian Secondary Schools. And secondly, to suggest an alternative way to view the dynamic nature of the policy implementation process. It is proposed that a shift in the way the change process is viewed will promote a better understanding of complexities of change and led to more sensitive and informed actions by both policy makers and implementors alike.

Theoretical Perspectives

By the late seventies most research literature suggested that planned educational changes, when successful, pass through similar phases of "Adoption", "Implementation", and "Institutionalisation". Of the three change phases, by far the major of research endeavours have focused on the middle phase of implementation. As a consequence little recent knowledge has been gained about the adoption phase and its relationship to the subsequent phase of implementation.

In the 1980's literature concerned with planned educational change suggested the process is far more complex and dynamic than previously thought; subject to the influence of many factors over a long period of time. This realisation led researchers to consider not only the characteristics of the innovation itself but also the political, economic, organisational, and

contextual explanations of the total change process. For instance, Crossley (1984), found political factors warranted special attention. He suggested that change is a politically charged issue and the continuity of an educational policy is highly dependent upon political continuity and stability. From this "macro" implementation perspective researchers have advocated more focus be given to policy instruments such as incentives, funds, mandates and regulations to ensure change. Other researchers such as Huberman (1983) and Fullan (1985), have advocated focusing on the local or "micro" implementation process. Here the change process is viewed as being influenced by the social or cultural characteristics of the adopting school. From this perspective, change involves alteration to the cultural context, to the beliefs and practices of its members, and to relationships among people within the organisation targeted for change. In short, change can be seen as the creation of a new setting. Given the above two foci it seemed appropriate when analysing school restructuring to adopt a more holistic perspective on the policy implementation process. In short to employ a perspective that would give attention to the macro and micro implementation concerns and the connections between them.

Research Approach

It was within such a holistic framework, that a research study was undertaken to critically analyse the implementation of a Western Australian Ministry of Education policy concerning the establishment of School-Based Decision-Making Groups.

Focus was given to the complex sets of interactions occurring as the policy implementation process unfolded. These interactions were viewed as occurring within two change environments. The first, the general change environment, was shared by all schools under study and reflected the broader economic, political and educational pressures prompting change, in short macro implementation processes. The second, the specific change environment was particular to each school reflecting such aspects as the prevailing organisational climate (Dellar 1991), leadership (Hall, et.al, 1984), and decision-making procedures of the school affecting the change, in short the micro implementation processes.

Specific data collection and analysis techniques varied from macro to micro focus. At the macro level, policy statements and related Ministry of Education documents were analysed along with press extracts from a range of associations detailing their respective views on the proposed restructuring endeavour. Semi-structured interviews were held with Ministry of Education officials who were either directly involved with the development of the policy or had responsibility for overseeing its implementation throughout the school system. In addition, similar semi-structured interviews were held with the key individuals that represented Parents and Citizens Association, the Teachers Union, Superintendents and

Principals/ Deputy Principals Associations. Both documents and interview transcripts formed the main data sources for analysis of the macro implementation process and the basis on which that process was mapped.

At the micro level, in order to gain an adequate understanding of the change process, complex data of different types needed to be collected from a number of different sources, hence a multi-instrument approach also formed the basis of data collection at this level. While the primary data source was derived from interviews of participants involved in the change process, additional techniques including non-participant observation, questionnaire / surveys, content analysis of printed documents such as school-level policy statements, and observations of planning meetings, were used. For each school, detailed portrayals of the implementation events were distilled in order to capture the complexities of the implementation process.

Cross-case analysis of the case-study data was then undertaken to draw out particular issues, events and interactions that appeared to be of importance in directing the implementation process within individual schools and across all sites.

The Policy Innovation

In 1987 the Ministry of Education embarked of a radical plan to restructure the state education system with its announcement of the "Better Schools Programme". In character, this policy comprised a "loose bundle" of components, Rice & Rogers (1980) including strategic planning, and site funding, signalling a number of changes to the organisational and administrative practices of schools. Central to the range of restructuring foci was the establishment of school-based decision-making groups (SBDMG's). These groups were to serve as the basis of an approach to school-based management which permitted school staff and community representatives to exercise more autonomy over decisions concerning educational policy and school development. The initiative therefore involved a strategy to create self-determining schools.

The notion of devolved decision making and school development planning in Western Australian schools was first posited in earlier Beasley Report into Education(1984). However, particular impetus for such restructuring can be linked to a comprehensive review of the public sector conducted by the Western Australian Government Functional Review Committee, (White Paper: Managing Change in the Public Sector: 1986). Given that the Education Department employed some 22 000 persons associated with over 700 schools and colleges, and received a quarter of the State government budget, it was understandable that an examination of the efficiency of the organisation was deemed necessary to make it more cost

effective. Therefore while the policy on SBDMG's reflected a philosophy of devolved decision-making and school self-determination, more important they represented a corporate managerialist vision for the school system. Hence the policy focus was concerned with creating a more responsive, efficient and accountable education system.

Abstract in nature, the initial policy document contained only general information about the structure and functions of a school-based decision-making group. Further, apart from a broad time-line for change, there was little evidence of a considered plan for implementation of such groups across the system. This lack of specificity with regard to the form(s) and functions of SBDMG's appeared to be an intentional feature of the policy. Given, the range of school types and the diversity of both geographic and cultural environments throughout the state system, a *flexible* policy would enable a number of configurations to emerge that better reflected the uniqueness of particular educational settings. Wise (1983), described such educational change policies as "bundles of potentialities" or predispositions waiting to be defined at the local level. While such policy characteristics would seem desirable, the lack of specificity created a degree of uncertainty at the macro and micro level, not only about the critical features of SBDMGs' but also about how to proceed with the implementation of the policy. It is the subsequent implementation actions issues and process that form the focus of this paper.

An Overview of the Macro Implementation Events.

Macro implementation reflected a process of progressive clarification and evolution of the initial policy document. This process was dramatically affected by the lack of clarity among all stakeholding groups, including the architects, about the nature and implications of policy innovation itself. To guide the implementation process, a taskforce comprised of representatives from several stakeholding groups devised tentative guide-line documents concerning the formation of SBDMG's and other components of the "Better Schools" document. While two Ministry personnel held responsibility the drafting of these guide-lines, ideas and responses from relevant bodies such as the Teachers Union and the Parents and Citizens Association was sought and considered. As taskforce meetings continued the policy was given fabric, reviewed, re-written, and then released as "official" guidelines for implementation.

While it may be argued that this policy development process provided for adequate consultation among *all* relevant parties, the dominant role assumed by the Ministry of Education personnel in developing and disseminating the guidelines, appeared to run counter to the very notion of the creation of devolved decision-making. The initial quest for input from stakeholders gave way to a loosely coordinated, erratic consultative approach directed by the Ministry. Predicably the deliberations among stakeholders became

somewhat conflicted as parties jockeyed to influence the form and substance of the guidelines. Unfortunately the lack of an authentic collaborative approach to macro implementation soon resulted in a type of fierce "political bargaining" among stakeholders that resulted in real and sustained conflict between parties. The disaffected stakeholding groups further crystallised attitudes and opinions towards the policy and resulted in massive disruption to both the macro and micro implementation process.

The Macro Implementation Players.

The Parents and Citizens Response

Within the first few meetings of the Ministry taskforce, concerns about a number of elements of the total restructuring proposals were being expressed. The Parents and Citizens representatives had been keen to see the establishment of mechanisms for enhanced community participation in schools for some sixty years. However, contention surfaced with respect to the Ministries preference for structure and function of school-based decision-making groups and the relationship that such groups might have with prevailing administrative decision-making and groups such as P&C associations. Such concern was evidenced an P & C Association official who stated:

> The group (Ministry taskforce) discussed the draft guidelines document in a very casual manner. The impression given was that the establishment of School-Based Decision-Making Groups was very simple. These groups can be set up in a very short period of time and we(Parents and Citizens Association) needn't concern ourselves about whether they are elected or whether they are effective and make useful decisions.

The Teachers' Union Response

While the concerns of the Parents and Citizens Association were acknowledged and to some extent accommodated the Ministry representatives appeared more perturbed by the very vocal opposition being voiced by the Teachers Union. As a Ministry representative stated:

> Essentially their [the State School Teachers Union] opposition is a deeply philosophical one. There are numerous areas of contention.... just what is the function of the School-Based Decision-Making Group. What are its powers and how wide are those powers. There is a whole gamut of things here. Its powers over finance, its power to influence the curriculum and curriculum policy, its relationship to the operational management of the school, its capacity to influence the selection of staff and making recommendations about selection of staff. All these things that were inferred in the Better Schools Report as part of the role of the School-Based Decision-Making Group made discussions particularly contentious. (Manager)

Such fundamental opposition to the restructuring initiatives from a key organisation as the Teachers Union suggested the implementation process would be complex, conflicted and possibly very protracted.

Following the 1987 Annual conference of the Teachers' Union a document entitled "Give Teachers and Students a Fair Go: a Rationale for Change" was produced. This document presented the Union's stance on all the key initiatives presented in the Better Schools Report. Issues such as the School Grant, School Staffing Entitlement, and School Staff Management were given comprehensive attention. The document repeated the need for provision of appropriate resources, time, support and in-servicing to enable staff to effectively participate in school-based decision-making. Support factors which had not been addressed or accommodated in the Better Schools Report.

The Secondary Principals' Association Response

While the Unions response to the initial policy statement could be described as cautious and guarded the Principals' Association was anything but. There was deep-felt concern about the participation of parents and community members in school decision-making. Key related concerns involved the level of interest and competence existing among members of the school community to enable them to effectively participate in school decision-making. In addition there was concern that the SBDMG might operate in a way that usurped the authority of the Principal. The President of the Principals Association clearly rejected the notion of power-sharing or collaborative decision-making when he stated:

> It must be clearly understood by staff and parents alike that the Principal is the leader of the school and is responsible to the Ministry as well as the community for its efficient and effective functioning. The leadership role is decisive and unique and can not be shared. Neither can it be delegated or abrogated.
>
> (Nolan, 1987, p.15)

The president suggested that such apathy permits the radical parents to impose their views on the school.

> In these circumstances opportunities are rife for the power-hungry or misguided who have a personal dislike for schools to make life difficult for the schools.
>
> (Nolan, 1987, p.15)

Clearly the very notion of a form of devolved decision-making that permitted parental participation was viewed as very threatening, consequently many principals were prepared to resist and reject the policy outright.

Despite the turbulence within the macro policy context the Ministry directed taskforce persevered with it brief to develop policy guidelines. Towards the end of the year a discussion

document was presented to senior Ministry personnel ready for release to schools. While division of opinion and expressions of concern by stakeholding groups continued, the work of the taskforce was deemed by the Ministry to be complete. In its place a project team comprised of Ministry personnel only was to press ahead with the development of more specific guidelines for implementation. Unlike the 1987 taskforce the 1988 project team had no formal input mechanism for representatives from the Union, Principal Associations or the Parents and Citizens Association. Operating in isolation, these organisations forged their own translation of the initial Ministry policy and began to promote *their* preferred model of School Based Decision-Making Groups. The dissemination strategies employed by these groups included direct contact with school personnel and the use of both the print and electronic media.

Target School Responses

Following the initial announcement of the Better Schools Policy some schools interpreted the policy as legitimising individual school initiatives for radical restructuring. While some Ministry personnel were concerned that such schools might institute unacceptable changes, others viewed them as sources of functioning models and information which could help further shape the emerging policy. The majority of schools however, appeared less enthusiastic about embracing the policy. Indeed there were increasing demands for more Ministry clarification of policy, more direction and implementation support. For its part, the Ministry payed little attention to provision of such support preferring instead to focus on critical amendments to the existing legislation and regulations that could drive home the changes.

When copies of the draft regulations were circulated among stakeholding bodies there was immediate and widespread opposition to them. A second version of the draft regulations was produced June 1989. However, as far as the Union and the Parents and Citizens Association was concerned critical points of dispute had not been resolved and there had been no real change to the substance of the regulations. As a consequence, opposition deepened.

By June 1989 the The Teachers' Union was so concerned about the impact the a SBDMG would have on teaching staff and classroom instruction it issued a directive to members to cease all participation in the implementation process. This directive marked the beginning of one of the most protracted industrial disputes ever undertaken by teachers in Western Australia and had a profound impact on both the macro and micro implementation process. It took some two years and an industrial agreement between the Union and the Ministry of Education before the turbulence abated sufficiently for restructuring policies to be put back

on the agenda and a more consultative approach to be established. In January 1992 legislation was finally passed required all schools to have established a SBDMG that conforms to Ministry regulations. While it has taken some five years from the policy's initial launch to reach this point of proscriptive mandatory change, for many schools the implementation of SBDMGs' remains problematic.

Macro Implementation Summarised

Clearly the macro policy implementation process was one characterised by conflicted interaction between various stake-holding groups holding differing philosophic and political stances yet a similar determination to shape the emergent nature of the policy. It is these stakeholding groups that are viewed as constituting and reflecting the general change environment. As the macro implementation process unfolded not only did issues and actions stemming from the general change environment shape the policy innovation but the innovation itself had a pronounced affect on the nature of the change environment.

The interactive nature of the macro implementation process is represented in Figure 1 below.

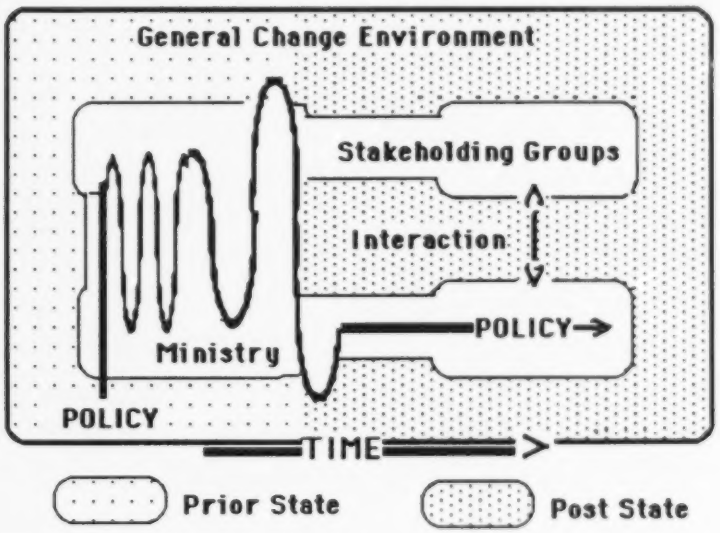

FIGURE: 1

Nature of Macro Implementation of Policy

The wave-like line stemming from the general change environment represents the passage of the Ministry policy on school-based decision-making groups (SBDMG's) as it undergoes

progressive clarification and modification. Influencing the nature of the policy innovation are those stakeholding groups within the general change environment. Periods of intense interaction between the key stakeholders and the policy are represented by a contracted wavelength. The separation of the wave indicates the disjuncture and conflict between Ministry and other stakeholding groups particularly the Teachers Union. Just as elements within the change environment modify and shape the emergent policy so the policy prompts changes in the change environment. The interactive relationship between policy and environment is indicated by an alteration to the background shading.

An Overview of the Micro Implementation Events.

It was against this turbulent background of progressive policy clarification at the **macro level** that individual school communities embarked on their own process of policy translation and implementation of school-based decision-making groups (SBDMG's).

Across sites, the common strategy employed to plan for implementation involved the formation of a planning group or planning committee. Such committees were comprised of representatives drawn from the school staff and parents. Their brief was to formulate guide-lines for the structure and functions of a SBDMG and to consider ways in which the school might establish such a group. Guided by the philosophy of "self-determining schools" and prompted by the abstract wording of initial policy statement on SBDMG's Principals of some schools gave members of their planning committees latitude to translate and adapt the innovation to match the needs of their school. During this planning phase, key members of the group focused not only on the original policy statement about SBDMGs, but also on what Fullan (1985) referred to as "situational knowledge". That is, knowledge about the characteristics of their school and its community. Each committee commendably sought information about their respective school communities through surveys and discussion. Against such knowledge participants attempted to determine what were the desirable characteristics of a SBDMG for their particular school. For example, in schools where data indicated the existence of a poor organisational climate, little history of participatory decision-making, a responder type leadership and a poor parental participation in the life of the school, the implementation focus was on modifying the policy innovation while making **marginal** yet real change to the existing organisation of the school. At other schools where data indicated the existence of a good organisational climate, little concern about parental participation and an open collaborative style of leadership, the implementation focus was on making substantial and dramatic changes to the existing authority relationships and organisational procedures of the school. In such schools, in the absence of specific

Ministry restrictions the most radical and far reaching translation of policy possible was undertaken.

The micro implementation process is represented in Figure 2, as the interaction of the policy with the characteristics of the adopting school.

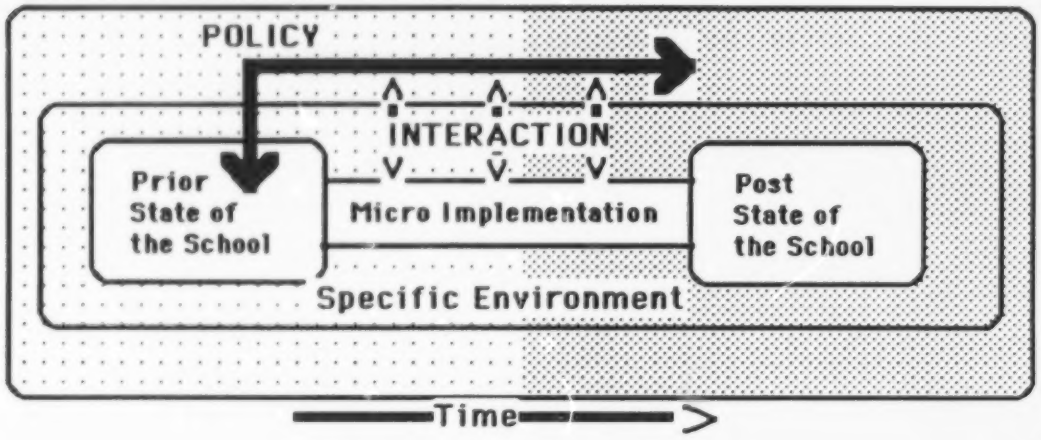

FIGURE: 2

Nature of Micro Implementation of Policy

The policy is represented above as emerging from the broad political and educational context for change that is shared by all schools within the state education system. The specific change environment is particular to each adopting school and reflects the nature of the school context or setting. Nestled within this specific environment is the school itself. The organisational and social characteristics of the school prior to implementation is represented at the top of the figure under the heading of "prior state of the school". The outcomes of the implementation process are represented at the bottom of the figure as "post state of the school" The micro implementation process is represented by those series of events occurring as the emerging policy innovation interacts with the characteristics of the school. In a general sense, change is viewed as that process whereby the school moves from its existing state to an altered state.

Connections Between Macro and Micro Implementation of Policy.

When the macro and micro implementation process are examined together it is very evident that implementation of policy was occurring simultaneously across levels within the education system. At the central office of the Ministry of Education, project teams were transforming the initial policy statement into specific guidelines for the implementation of policy. At school level, members of staff and parents' organisations were interpreting the initial policy statements and proposing specific courses of action for their school. Operating at a point between these two levels were School District personnel. As agents of the Central

Office, Superintendents and their staff were given the task of promoting the policy implementation process by encouraging school-community initiatives yet at the same time, trying to restrict unbridled actions that could run ahead of the emerging "official" Ministry of Education generated policy guidelines. In addition, other stakeholding groups including the Teachers Union, the Principals' Association and Parents and Citizens Association were disseminating information designed to influence both the macro and micro policy implementation process.

While the policy implementation process was occurring at different levels of the system it would be incorrect to assume that the process developed independently and in isolation from each level. Indeed, the data derived from this study confirms that view of Crossley (1984) and Huberman & Miles (1984) that schools are open social systems. As open social systems, schools are not only affected by, but have an affect on the nature of ideas and information stemming from the general and specific change environments. In short, reactions, ideas, information and assistance stemming from a range of groups flowed from school to Central Office and back to schools again shaping the policy, influencing the implementation process and affecting the level of turbulence within the change environment. These critical influence of Ministry directives, information and communications, existing decision-making bodies, support for change and the role of the Teachers Union form the focus of this section.

Ministry Communiques and Micro Implementation.

Within a year the implied freedom for individual schools to translate and adapt the policy on SBDMGs (that is, to be self-determining) was curtailed by the issuing of more prescriptive Ministry of Education guide-lines on implementation. In the latter half of 1988 and into 1989 a variety of documents concerning the implementation of policies related to restructuring were disseminated to schools. These documents were designed to clarify for school community members, the Ministry's position on, and recommendations about, such issues as the establishment of SBDMGs. Despite the rhetoric of devolved decision-making, the very notion of "self-determining schools" appeared to be illusory. For Principals and other members of school-level planning committees, the Ministry of Education appeared to be delimiting and prescribing the nature and extent of change occurring at the school level. Several Principals indicated that, in reality, the Ministry aimed at the creation of "self-managing schools" rather than "self-determining schools". Accordingly, Principals felt pressured to assume the role corporate managers and install mechanisms to make their school more efficient and accountable organisations. The authority to make critical educational policy would not be devolved to schools but would remain with the Ministry of Education.

For schools that had already begun to frame their own guide-lines, the emergence of Ministry documents and statements forced the planning committee members to review, re-interpret, adapt and re-develop those guide-lines. Rather than clarify the policy for participants, the new documents and enabling legislation created frustration and served to heighten the confusion at the school level. What for some planning groups had been a period of stimulating collaboration was reduced to a conflicted process of dysfunctional political bargaining at the micro level. Members sought alternative information that could be used to preserve their emerging decision-making authority or to oppose the formation of a SBDMG and re-establish traditional decision-making structures and procedures.

Information and Communication

The importance of information in planning for implementation and the manner in which such information was communicated to members of school-level planning committees, played a critical role in determining the implementation events. While initially information concerning the policy on SBDMGs' had stemmed from Central Office of the Ministry the emerging turbulence between stakeholding groups had resulted in a number of alternative statements and guidelines being issued from the Union, the Parents and Citizens Association and the Principals Association via documents and the media. In addition, models of SBDMGs and development planning procedures (Caldwell & Spinks 1988) flowed into schools from other schools and interstate.

The carrier or communicator of the information appeared to influence the manner in which the members of the planning committee responded to the information. All official Ministry information was disseminated to the school and members of the planning committees via the Principal. This dissemination procedure permitted some Principals to screen and selectively communicate ideas to members of the planning committee. Such Principals, tended to used the "authority" of such Ministry information to direct the planning process. When staff or parents forwarded ideas about possible functions of the SBDMG that were contrary to those held by the Principal, the Principal would counter and limit such ideas with a general reference to "stated Ministry intentions". Several Principals relied heavily on information about SBDMGs obtained from their colleagues in other schools of from their prior experience with organisational change. Such information in the form of "preferred models" was promoted and discussed in detail within planning committees. In such schools little consideration of alternative models or information was undertaken, hence the existence of effective participatory decision-making was questionable.

At other schools, members of the planning committees actively sought "alternative" information about the possible structure and functions of a SBDMG. Such alternative information, especially that obtained from the Parents and Citizens Organisation was used by parent members of the planning committee to support their views about the structure and function of a SBDMG. With no consensus emerging at the macro level about the forms and functions of SBDMGs' it was inevitable that school meetings became conflicted rather than collaborative, and lead to hostility and intransigence among members.

Existing Decision-Making Bodies

An important issue influencing the implementation process involved the impact a SBDMG posed to existing decision-making groups within the school system. As information about the possible functions of the SBDMG became more evident, concern grew among members of the school-level planning committees about the possible loss of decision-making authority of existing groups such as the Parent & Citizens body, the school administration and the senior staff. At some schools, members of the existing decision-making groups; including senior staff groups and P & C's reacted strongly to the suggestion that the SBDMG take on aspects of *their* role. Here members sought information that could be used to oppose the establishment of a SBDMG and to preserve their existing decision-making authority. Where the perceived threat to existing decision-making authority was greatest, so too was the openness of the conflict between members of the planning committee.

Maintaining Support for Implementation.

As the implementation planning process continued, issues emerging both from within the planning committees and from sources external to it, appeared to have a noticeable effect on level of school community support for the innovation. By mid-1989, many teachers were expressing the view that their primary and most important role was concerned with classroom teaching, not participating in administrative decision-making. It was argued that committee meetings would take teachers out of classrooms, affect the time they had for preparation and marking, and disrupt the education of students. There was also a growing concern among teachers that main purpose of the restructuring initiatives was the installation of teacher accountability mechanisms in schools. It was feared that such mechanisms could reduce the professional autonomy of teachers. In addition, teachers indicated that there were too many concurrent changes confronting them and that they had been provided with limited or totally inadequate support to enable adequate implementation to be undertaken. To be required to participate in the implementation of yet another change was viewed by many teachers as the "last straw". Clearly many teachers saw participation in SBDMGs and School Development Planning as a cost rather than a benefit. For several schools,

the perception of change-related disruption had reached a point where many staff were openly promoting the outright rejection of any further change and were lobbing the Union accordingly.

Even Principals seemed to have become less enthusiastic about the change. Not only were many Principals faced with the growing discontent among school community members, but many were also being confronted by a fundamental change to their own role from one of "educational leader" to "corporate manager". This was a role change they apparently did not appear to welcome. Principals in particular were facing a real dilemma. Given the deteriorating organisational climate of their schools, persisting with implementation plans was likely to threaten the stability of these school's overall educational operations and be detrimental to the students.

It was against this background of growing discontent and conflict that the Teachers' Union was called on to take action. Not only was the Union concerned about the inadequate level of consultation by the Ministry concerning policy development and macro implementation planning but also on the impact implementation of school restructuring policies was having on the working conditions of its members. In response, the Union sought compensation via salary package increase and changes to the working conditions of its members. When the package was rejected by the Ministry of Education the union issued a directive to all members to cease participation in the implementation of both SBDMGs and School Development Plans.

In summary, officials in the Ministry, Union, Principals Associations and Parents and Citizens Associations exerted influence on macro policy implementation. The nature of macro policy implementation influenced the perceptions and decisional procedures undertaken by teachers, parents, and principals during the micro implementation process. Simultaneously these school-level personnel exerted influence directly or through their representative associations on the macro policy implementation process.

Theoretical Implications for Policy Implementation

When data concerning both the macro and micro policy implementation process were combined and analysed the emergent view of the change process was markedly different from the centre periphery / top down approach which had guided the Ministry change endeavours. Indeed data indicates in reality, the policy implementation process is more loosely ordered and far more complex than contemporary theory suggests. Perceptions concerning the policy and decisional responses emerging during the macro and micro implementation processes were constantly subject to reappraisals as events unfolded. These reappraisals reflected dynamic interactions occurring within the school and between the school and its external environment.

A key finding to emerge from this study is that policy implementation is best viewed as a process of "interactive modification" That is, a process whereby the policy innovation prompt modifications to be made to the adopting organisation (the schools) and where the adopting organisations prompt modifications to be made to the policy innovation in a complex and dynamic manner. This concept of "interactive modification" finds support in and is similar to processes of mutual adaptation and evolution McLaughlin, (1976), Berman & McLaughlin (1980), Wise (1983), and Miles (1987). However, "interactive modification" differs in a fundamental and critical way. The concepts of adaptation and evolution suggest a reactive process of change primarily to the innovation. Thus the terms adaptation and evolution imply it is the conditions or characteristics of the change environment prompt changes to the nature of the innovation rather than the reverse. Interactive modification goes beyond the notion of responsive "adaptation" or "evolution" to suggest change is simultaneously occurring to both the innovation and the change environment. This dynamic relationship reflects that which human systems hold with their natural environment. While people are subject to the elements of their environment and adapt to it they also exercise the capacity to dramatically alter that environment. In similar fashion interactive modification suggests the educational policy innovation is affected by yet affects the nature of the adopting environment. The complex and dynamic sets of process variables which characterised the implementation process are represented in Figure three.

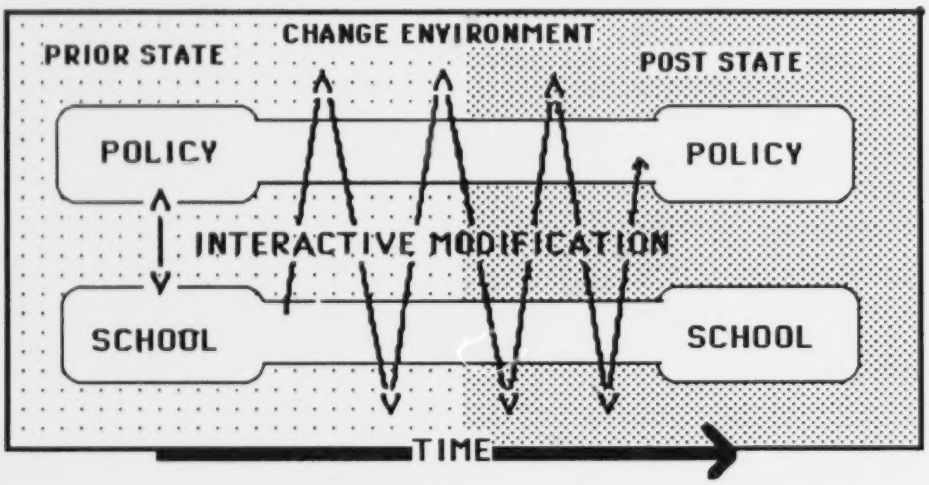

FIGURE: 3
IMPLEMENTATION AS
INTERACTIVE MODIFICATION

Figure three represents a synthesis of the the macro and micro implementation processes. The change environment, as represented above, forms the broad political, economic and educational

context for change. It is from this environment that the policy innovation stemmed, along with related clarifying documents and directives that were concerned with the implementation of the innovation. Within this change environment is the school itself. The macro *and* micro implementation process is viewed as the interaction of the policy innovation with the characteristics of the school and the change environment. The outcomes of the implementation process are represented by the altered states of the policy and **both** the school and the change environment.

It is suggested that those with a responsibility for promoting and affecting change at both macro and micro level, view implementation as a dynamic process of interactive modification. It is through such a change perspective that closer attention might be given to the dynamic characteristics of the change environment, the characteristics of the policy innovation and the manner in which their interaction prompts modification. While a comprehensive documentation of specific implementation considerations is beyond the scope of this paper a brief listing of key recommendation is offered. In particular attention needs to be given to the following:

- open collaboration by all stakeholding groups during the formative macro implementation phase, when planning for the introduction of major restructuring initiatives or innovations ;

- developing a shared philosophy and and sense of efficacy about the policy among all stakeholders. Such knowledge should provide a context for implementation and an understanding of the implications of the change;

- ensuring central or core components of the innovation were made explicit while accommodating variation in the translation of policy at the school level;

- providing front-end and on-going support and professional development for school personnel that will increase their receptivity, knowledge and skills to action the innovation. In terms of the policy under study, this involves members moving from individual subject orientated thinking to collective, whole-school thinking; from isolated decision-making patterns to group decision-making;

- ensuring that throughout the macro and micro implementation process information flow is multi-directional. Establishing a communication network that facilitates information sharing from Ministry to school, within schools, from school to school, school to community and back again; and

- recognising that the implementation of any innovation involves some degree of disruption to the status quo. Where the proposed change involves a fundamental alteration to existing decision-making structures and procedure, conflict would seem inevitable. It is important that those with responsibility for implementation view conflicts as a normal part of the change process and not a cue to abandon implementation efforts.

Through a consideration of such findings and more important the adoption of an orientation towards change as interactive modification, those with a responsibility for school restructuring might recognise the connections between macro and micro implementation processes and develop appropriate support and strategies to better facilitate the policy implementation process.

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